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## **Book Review**

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**Philadelphia: A New Urban Direction, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
edition**  
**Office of the City Controller**  
**City of Philadelphia**  
**Saint Joseph's University Press, Philadelphia**  
**2005**  
ISBN #0-916101-53-3

*When I first received this book for review, my initial reaction was that it was a technical city abstract that would be of interest to persons solely having some business or relationship to Philadelphia— a relatively small market. So, for a while, it went into a pile of unread books sitting on the floor of my study. Then one day I picked it up and began reading it, and as I began to read further though, through the many pages of preface, prologue, and introductions, I changed my mind. I began to view the book as a city praise and prayer tome— sort of a city hall fire side chat; mainly due to the language and voice of so many contributors who expressed so much pride in their city both in terms of its rich history and in terms of futuristic visions toward contemporary renewal into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A city actually trying to reinvent or reengineer itself in the face of economic*

*constraints and other inner city problems experienced by so many other big American cities. But, if this city report is a voice of hope, it is also a plan to make their dreams come true. If this plan works, then it could be a model for other American cities who also hope for a better future– to actually plan for a better future.*

*Surprisingly, I liked this book, and it has value to graduate students and professors in urban and regional planning particularly. It is a model of how a city examines itself and positions itself to engage in a new century and in complete understanding of its role as a city in a state and in a country. It understands economic constraints; high taxes to pay for expensive urban upkeep forces the very residents the city needs to remain in place and engage in commerce and pay taxes– but when taxes are increasing, the tax paying population is decreasing. It admits crime and poverty but is unafraid to do something about it. At almost every point in this book, there are recommendations for action, along with action steps and fiscal impacts. Since most people reading this review, and many who hopefully will read this large and detailed report and plan do not live in Philadelphia, we are unlikely to know if this plan, this vision of theirs will actually work. However, it is important to note that a city is stepping up to the plate recognizing itself, warts and all, and is striding toward a new invention of itself as it moves through the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Philadelphia does not seem to be waiting to see what the future holds, they seem to want to make their future in a way that suits them. No apologies here, just heads up planning. I admire that and I wish more cities would embrace their future in this meaningful way. This is a book worth reading– from an academic standpoint sure, but also from the standpoint of inspiration for other cities to follow.*